



CALHOUN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Calhoun County Courthouse, located in Grantsville and built in 1941, has a unique history behind its establishment.

Calhoun County was formed from Gilmer County in 1856, seven years before West Virginia became a state. The Calhoun County Courthouse, located in Grantsville, has a very unique story behind its establishment.

After the Civil War, there was a dispute over whether the county seat should be located in Arnoldsburg or Grantsville. Established in Arnoldsburg since 1858, a courthouse was built in Grantsville in 1869, only to be destroyed by fire. According to legend, it was arson.

Jacob Clammer was hired to rebuild the courthouse in Grantsville. He placed night watchmen at the site to prevent future fires from occurring. Following completion of the structure, the Legislature ordered Calhoun County to move the county seat to Grantsville. Although there were disputes and challenges over qualified voters, Grantsville became the official county seat in 1871.

In 1880, the county administration razed the frame courthouse and erected a two-story brick building for \$8,400. It would provide for the county for 60 years. In 1898, residents of Arnoldsburg attempted again to bring the courthouse to Arnoldsburg, claiming that the structure in Grantsville was dangerous and unsafe. Voters defeated that suggestion by a slim margin of 10 votes.

In 1939, the county administration decided that a new courthouse, combined with a jail, was to be developed. Construction commenced in April 1941. P.R. Lewis of Huntington was in charge of the rebirth of the courthouse, with the aid of employees of the Works Progress Administration. The courthouse costs, which included 13 rooms, three stories and construction of native stone, totaled \$45,000. The courthouse built in 1941 is still being used today and includes numerous county government offices, although the county jail is no longer being used for incarceration.

By Robin J. Gordon
Photos by Diane Ludwig



In a simpler, bygone era, Heritage Villagers might have picked up their necessities at the Jarvis Store and then stopped by the Starcher Blacksmith Shop. Charley Starcher first opened his blacksmith shop up the right fork of Barnes Run in Hur in 1915. He served the Hur community as its blacksmith until 1960.

Throughout the year, there are a variety of activities that anyone can enjoy in the inviting surroundings of Calhoun County. In Grantsville, you can enjoy activities at the Little Kanawha River, which is considered a fisherman's paradise and includes wildlife sightings. Canoeing and kayaking are also favorites among the locals for the appealing scenery and the calm surroundings. In June, Grantsville hosts the Wood Festival. This year's 48th annual event featured local artisan displays, musical entertainment and truck and ATV mud bogs. If you are looking into your Calhoun County ancestry, the places to begin are the Knotts Genealogy Room at Calhoun County Library and the Family History Center on Main Street in Grantsville.

"The Family History Center is a museum where people can come and take pleasure in artifacts with a

variety of themes of Calhoun County," said local historian Robert Bonar.

At Calhoun County Park, located on Route 16 South in Grantsville, there is an abundance of trails for horseback riders, mountain bikers, avid hikers and leisurely nature walkers. The park, which offers spectacular views of the night skies for stargazers, also draws many out-of-state visitors.

Heritage Village, a project of the Calhoun Historical Society, is also located at the park. It includes treasured original structures that have been relocated and preserved for the public to view. The one-room Stevens School, the Starcher Blacksmith Shop and the Jarvis Store are just a few places to visit.

"In the Jarvis Store, it feels like you are stepping back in time," said Terry Harris, Historical Society

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member. “The shelves are filled with donated items of products that were what your grandparents had on their shelves.”

Take a walk back in time, sit on the porch swing and reminisce of days gone by.

For entertainment, Mt. Zion Drive-In is one of the oldest outdoor movie theaters left in West Virginia. The annual Mt. Zion Community Park ox roast is held in August.

Traveling on Routes 33-119, between Millstone and Stumptown, you will notice “the little round church” named Albert’s Chapel. It is one of the only circular churches in West Virginia. Built in 1898, this house of worship has eight sides. According to local residents, it means “there are no corners for the devil to hide in.”

In late September, West Fork Community Action Park, located on Route 33 in Arnoldsburg, produces the sweet taste of sorghum at the West Virginia Molasses Festival. There are molasses-making demonstrations, local art and produce exhibits and musical entertainment.

On Route 16 in the southern part of Calhoun County is Upper West Fork Park, which provides a variety of festivals throughout the year, including a bluegrass festival on Memorial Day weekend, the annual Fireman’s Bluegrass Festival during the second weekend of August and an Octoberfest celebration. The festivals provide bluegrass and gospel music, crafters and good clean family entertainment. Throughout the year, Calhoun County has many activities for all ages to enjoy. **WV**

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Above: The only site in Calhoun County on the Historic Register is Albert's Chapel on Sand Ridge, noted because of its unusual round construction, so built that "there are no corners for the devil to hide in." The church was completely restored in 1996-97 with donated funds. Below: The Freed Post Office was originally located on Leading Creek Road off Route 16, 10 miles northeast of Grantsville. A center of activity in this coal mining town, it once stood near a telegraph agency, hotel, general store, wheelwright and flour mill. Sadly, most of the town was erased by a fire in 1933. The post office, however, was spared from the blaze.

